

on a spree of beatings that police say was targeted at gay men. Robert Joyce testified that while walking along a stretch of coast popular to gay people, he was attacked by the youths. According to police reports, Joyce was beaten for several minutes, including being hit in the head with a 2-inch metal pipe. He required 80 stitches to mend his wounds. During the attack the attackers yelled, "Kill him! kill him! kill the faggot!" The group of youths attacked several other gay men in the area before being apprehended by police.

I believe that the Government's first duty is to defend its citizens, to defend them against the harms that come out of hate. The Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act is a symbol that can become substance. I believe that by passing this legislation and changing current law, we can change hearts and minds as well.

#### PROTECTING AMERICA'S MINERS ACT

Mr. KENNEDY. I am proud to have introduced the Protecting America's Miners Act.

The need for this legislation is clear. This year began with the terrible tragedies at the Sago and Alma mines in West Virginia. Within days of the new year, 14 coal miners had died. In February, I went to West Virginia to meet with some of the families of the men who died. It was one of the most moving visits I have had in my career in the Senate. I left West Virginia with renewed commitment to passing legislation this year to improve safety and health conditions in our Nation's mines. The expert testimony at the HELP Committee hearing on mine safety in March only reinforced my commitment.

I was also deeply moved earlier this month by the West Virginia hearings on the Sago mine disaster and Randal McCloy's letter to his fallen coworkers' families about the conditions in the mine after the explosion. We have lost 26 coal miners so far this year—more than died in all of last year. The victims of these disasters and of prior disasters, like the explosion at Jim Walters No. 5, deserve nothing less than our dedication to making sure that they did not die in vain. The best way we can honor those fallen miners is to act on what we have learned. This bill is an important step in fulfilling that commitment.

There are many things we may still learn from these tragedies. But some lessons are already clear. We have not done enough to provide miners with oxygen and communications needed to survive an emergency. We must strengthen our safety enforcement so companies cannot treat safety violations as simply the cost of doing business. The average fine at the Sago mine was just \$156 dollars—less than most parking tickets. And many safety and health standards are woefully outdated.

To address these lessons, this bill requires warning systems to alert miners when the air in the mine is becoming dangerous, before a disaster occurs; the most up-to-date communications and tracking technology in mines as soon as possible so rescuers can locate and direct miners in an emergency; more oxygen stored in mines so miners can survive until they can evacuate or are rescued; rescue chambers so, as a last resort, if miners cannot evacuate, they can safely await rescue in the mine; and increased penalties for repeat violators and minimum penalties.

In addition, some very specific problems at the Sago mine came to light during the hearings this month in West Virginia, such as ineffective equipment, lack of communications, and families' exclusion from the investigation process. To address this, the bill requires companies to check on the reliability of the oxygen stored for use in an emergency; independent investigations and public hearings on serious accidents; and an opportunity for victims' families to participate in accident investigations.

This bill not only tries to learn from past disasters but also looks to the future. The bill includes a program to help MSHA replace its aging inspector workforce. These new safety standards will do no good if MSHA cannot properly staff its inspection teams to ensure that the new standards are being enforced. It also directs Federal research dollars where they are most urgently needed—to develop better breathing apparatus, communications technology, atmospheric warning systems, and mine rescue technology.

We have a responsibility as Members of Congress to see that our mine safety laws make our mines the safest in the world. I urge my colleagues to support the Protecting America's Miners Act.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### HONORING THE HONORABLE CHARLES L. YOUNG, SR.

• Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, it is my pleasure to congratulate the Honorable Charles L. Young, Sr. of Meridian, MS, for his 25 years of service as a member of the Mississippi House of Representatives. As chairman of the House Universities and Colleges Committee, he has worked effectively to improve the quality of education in our State.

Representative Young served his country as a member of the U.S. Army during the Korean war and was honored with the Bronze Star for Valor.

He has been recognized by his colleagues as a leader in the field of education, entrepreneurship, and social justice. As a pioneer in the civil rights movement, Representative Young was the first African-American member of the Meridian Chamber of Commerce. He has been a leader in the business community as chief executive officer

and President of E.F. Young, Jr., Manufacturing Company, a business that his parents started in 1931.

He was one of the founders of Mississippi Action for Progress, which was the parent organization in our State for Head Start. Mr. Young is also one of the founders of the Greater Meridian Health Clinic, which operates in six locations and has a mobile dental lab.

He is a member of Newell Chapel C.M.E. Church, and he sponsors a tennis camp for over 100 children each year.

Mr. President, I commend Representative Young for his exemplary citizenship and service to the residents of Lauderdale County and the State of Mississippi. I am proud to be his friend.●

#### RECOGNITION OF THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE OWOSSO MASONIC LODGE

• Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Owosso Masonic Lodge on its 150th anniversary. This is a significant milestone, and it is with pleasure that I thank the lodge for its many years of dedicated service to greater Owosso community. Tomorrow, a celebration will be held to commemorate this special occasion.

Service organizations play an important role in American society. These organizations play a key role in building stronger communities, often providing assistance to those most in need. The Owosso Masonic Lodge, which was chartered in January 1856 by the Grand Lodge of Michigan, has served the community well and has much of which to be proud. This lodge has worked to bring groups together over the years and has helped members work to achieve strong ethical standards.

I would also like to join the lodge in showing appreciation for the efforts of the 40- 50- and 80-year lodge members, who will be recognized at the celebration tomorrow. Among this group is Mr. George Hoddy, who at 100 years of age continues to be active in working to improve Owosso and the State of Michigan. I would like to recognize his long and distinguished membership in the Owosso Masonic Lodge. Mr. Hoddy's businesses have been a cornerstone of the local economy for many decades.

I know my colleagues join me in thanking the Owosso Masonic Lodge for 150 years of dedication and service to the community, and I wish them the best as they embark on another 150 years of distinguished service.●

#### MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message from the President of the United States was communicated to the Senate by Mr. Williams, one of his secretaries.